NOAA Teacher at Sea
Mike Laird
Onboard NOAA Ship RAINIER
July 24 - August 13, 2005

Log 7

Day 8: Monday, August 1

Time: 13:00
Latitude: 55° 53.4' N
Longitude: 158° 50.5' W
Visibility: 10 nautical miles (nm)
Wind Direction: 085°
Wind Speed: 12kts
Sea Wave Height: 0-1'
Swell Wave Height: 0-1'
Sea Water Temperature: 11.7° C
Sea Level Pressure: 1006.2 mb
Cloud Cover: Sky 7/8 covered; Lower level: stratus fractus, cumulus fractus of bad weather
Mid-level: altostratus

Science and Technology Log

Operating the RAINIER in port—as she transits from site to site, and as she lies at anchor acting as home base for the survey operations—requires that each of the ship's "departments" functions efficiently with a small margin for error. When things do go wrong, they must be handled using the resources available on the ship so that operations continue with as little down time as possible. Perhaps the greatest resource onboard the RAINIER is her personnel. Situations, like those listed below, continually arise and require those involved to demonstrate patience, innovation, problem solving abilities and determination:

- A cable getting caught in one of the pulleys on a gravity davit just after it has been used to lower a survey launch at 8:00 to begin its day of echo sounding. The cable must be replaced and the davit operational by the time the launch returns at 16:30.

- A crack in the hull of a launch (welded and "fixed" while the RAINIER was in port for three days in Kodiak) is allowing water into the launch at the rate of about a gallon an hour. The engineering people use some magic red goop to temporarily stop the leak until a permanent solution can be devised.

- Electronic equipment is very temperamental (cables jiggle loose during transits through rough seas, components can overheat, software glitches rear their heads, etc.) and continually requires TLC to keep it happy and functioning.

- Established, recognized Differential Global Positioning Systems (latitude and longitude data) and primary control stations (tide data) may not provide data that meets required specifications (because of their distance from the work area, topographic features, etc) necessitating the installation of temporary DGPS and tide station sites.

As a crew member, you never know what is going to come up and must always be willing and prepared to meet unforeseen challenges!

Personal Log

Last night, after a day of recording data on one of the survey launches, six of us had a chance to take one of the skiffs and go do a little fishing. Our primary target was halibut. We motored out to a site scouted earlier in the day during our survey ops, dropped our lines and began jigging right on the bottom. It wasn't long before I felt a tugging on my line, began reeling in, and pulled up a baby halibut (or "but" as my companions more versed in these matters call them). Not wanting to be accused as a cradle robber, I released it. I dropped my line again and after a few minutes of jigging, felt the tug, and reeled in a larger halibut (maybe a 15 pounder – I know technically still a baby). I released it also, because my companions assure me, "It's still early you'll get a bigger one." I didn't – of course. However, I did have success (a silver salmon, and four sea cod – I kept these). I also hooked a pea cod, an Irish Lord and two other small halibut – I didn't keep these. Fun times!